

CLAIMS

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1 1. A messaging system comprising:

- 2 a. a message server comprising a plurality of modalities for
3 transmitting messages, the message server being responsive to a
4 remote application configured to generate a message and a
5 designation of at least one of the transmission modalities, the
6 message server communicating with the application via a computer
7 network; and
8 b. an application program interface (API) comprising stored instructions
9 executing on the message server, the API receiving the message
10 and designation from the application and causing the message
11 server to effect transmission of the message according to the
12 designation.

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1 2. The system of claim 1 wherein the API is configured to interpret XML
2 syntax, the message and the designation being expressed as a request
3 formatted in XML syntax.

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1 3. The system of claim 1 wherein the message server comprises a database
2 for storing contact data, the API being configured to process a request from

3 the application to establish a database record specifying a member and
4 contact data for the member, the contact data including at least one contact
5 method specifying a transmission modality and data facilitating contact of
6 the member via the specified transmission modality, the API causing the
7 message server to send the message in accordance with the contact data.

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B 1 4. The system of claim 1 wherein the message server comprises a database
2 for storing contact data for a plurality of members, the API being configured
3 to process a request from the application to (i) access an existing database
4 record specifying a member and contact data for the member, the contact
5 data including at least one contact method specifying a transmission
6 modality and data facilitating contact of the member via the specified
7 transmission modality, or (ii) obtain contact data from the application for a
8 non-member, the API causing the message server to send the message in
9 accordance with the contact data.

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1 5. The system of claim 4 wherein the API is further configured to process a
2 request from the application to create a distribution list comprising a plurality
3 of the existing database records, the API causing the message server to send
4 the message to the members in the distribution list in accordance with the
5 contact data.

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7 the API causing the message server to effect transmission of the message
8 according to the designation.

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1 14. The API of claim 13 wherein the executing instructions interpret XML
2 syntax, the message and the designation being expressed as a request
3 formatted in XML syntax.

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1 15. The API of claim 13 wherein the message server comprises a database
2 for storing contact data, the API being configured to process a request from
3 the application to establish a database record specifying a member and
4 contact data for the member, the contact data including at least one contact
5 method specifying a transmission modality and data facilitating contact of
6 the member via the specified transmission modality, the API causing the
7 message server to send the message in accordance with the contact data.

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1 16. The API of claim 13 wherein the message server comprises a database
2 for storing contact data for a plurality of members, the API being configured
3 to process a request from the application to access an existing database
4 record specifying a member and contact data for the member, the contact
5 data including at least one contact method specifying a transmission
6 modality and data facilitating contact of the member via the specified
7 transmission modality, the API causing the message server to send the
8 message in accordance with the contact data.

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1 21. The API of claim 20 wherein, for each failed message, the API is
2 configured to return an explanation for the failure.

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1 22. The API of claim 18 wherein the message is addressed to at least one
2 contact, the message comprising a question, the API causing the message
3 server to pose the question to the at least one contact.

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1 23. The API of claim 22 wherein the executing instructions are configured to
2 respond to status requests from the application, the API returning, in
3 response to a status request specifying the message, status information
4 pertinent to the message including any response to the question by the at
5 least one contact.

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1 24. The API of claim 13 wherein the executing instructions are configured to
2 handle information in the form of objects, the objects including (i) member
3 objects designating member information for a plurality of potential recipients
4 of the message, (ii) contact objects specifying information facilitating
5 communication with the potential recipients in accordance with a plurality of
6 transmission modalities, (iii) job objects specifying messages and
7 characteristics thereof, and (iv) delivery objects specifying modes of message
8 delivery, the application providing the message and the designation in object
9 form.

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- 1 25. A method of handling and transmitting messages to recipients, the
2 method comprising the steps of:
- 3 a. providing a message server comprising a plurality of modalities for
4 transmitting messages, the message server being responsive to a
5 remote application configured to generate a message and a
6 designation of at least one of the transmission modalities;
 - 7 b. causing the message server to communicate with the application
8 via a computer network; and
 - 9 c. providing an application program interface (API) comprising stored
10 instructions executing on the message server, the API receiving the
11 message and designation from the application and causing the
12 message server to effect transmission of the message according to
13 the designation.

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- 1 26. The method of claim 25 wherein the API is configured to interpret XML
2 syntax, the message and the designation being expressed as a request
3 formatted in XML syntax.

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- 1 27. The method of claim 25 further comprising the step of providing a
2 database for storing contact data, the server processing a request from the
3 application to establish a database record specifying a member and contact
4 data for the member, the contact data including at least one contact method

5 specifying a transmission modality and data facilitating contact of the
6 member via the specified transmission modality, the server sending the
7 message in accordance with the contact data.

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1 28. The method of claim 25 further comprising the step of providing a
2 database for storing contact data for a plurality of members, the server
3 processing a request from the application to access an existing database
4 record specifying a member and contact data for the member, the contact
5 data including at least one contact method specifying a transmission
6 modality and data facilitating contact of the member via the specified
7 transmission modality, the server sending the message in accordance with
8 the contact data.

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1 29. The method of claim 28 further comprising the steps of (i) processing a
2 request from the application to create a distribution list comprising a plurality
3 of the existing database records, and (ii) sending the message to the
4 members in the distribution list in accordance with the contact data.

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1 30. The method of claim 28 wherein the existing database record comprises
2 a plurality of contact methods, the request from the application specifying at
3 least one of the contact methods, the message server sending the message
4 to the member in accordance with the at least one specified contact method.

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1 31. The method of claim 25 further comprising the step of responding to
2 status requests from the application, the server returning, in response to a
3 status request specifying a messaging task, status information pertinent to
4 the messaging task.

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1 32. The method of claim 32 wherein the status information includes a status
2 designation for the message, the status designation specifying (i) whether
3 the message has been sent, (ii) whether the message was successfully
4 received, (iii) whether the message failed, and (iv) whether the message has
5 been cancelled.

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1 33. The method of claim 32 wherein, for each failed message, the server
2 returns an explanation for the failure.

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1 34. The method of claim 25 wherein the message is addressed to at least
2 one contact, the message comprising a question, the message server posing
3 the question to the at least one contact.

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1 35. The method of claim 34 wherein server responds to status requests from
2 the application, the server returning, in response to a status request
3 specifying the message, status information pertinent to the message
4 including any response to the question by the at least one contact.

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1 36. The method of claim 25 wherein the API is configured to handle
2 information in the form of objects, the objects including (i) member objects
3 designating member information for a plurality of potential recipients of the
4 message, (ii) contact objects specifying information facilitating
5 communication with the potential recipients in accordance with a plurality of
6 transmission modalities, (iii) job objects specifying messages and
7 characteristics thereof, and (iv) delivery objects specifying modes of message
8 delivery, the application providing the message and the designation in object
9 form.

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